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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Wednesday, October 21, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "DRY CELLARS." Infromation from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering. Farmers' Bulletin 1572, Making Cellars Dry, available for 5¢ in coin on application to the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

--ooOoo--

I wonder how many of my listeners consider themselves good executives? A good executive, someone has said, is an administrator who gets other people to do things and do them right. Well, I'm afraid most women are not as good in their administrative capacity as they are in the traditional role of being willing workers. It's so much easier to do a job oneself than to prevail upon someone else to do it, - and do it right.

These remarks may seem a far cry from our topic for today -- "Dry Cellars." It's obvious that cellar improvement is a little out of the average woman's sphere. However, she may observe some things that her husband does not, especially as she is likely to go down cellar more often and see its condition and how it affects the matters that are properly in her domain.

Are you one of the numerous housewives who have been exasperated every spring by water seeping into the cellar -- particularly after a heavy rain or when snow begins to melt? Have you hesitated to go into a dank, uninviting cellar? Have you noticed mold on leather, jellies and other foods? Have you seen tools, plumbing and smoke pipes get rusty because of dampness?

Early fall is a good time to investigate and do away with these troubles. Sometimes the trouble is slight, resulting from an apparent and easily remedied local cause. Sometimes it is serious, due to hidden and not easily corrected causes. The cause or causes must be studied and determined, before you and your husband can decide on what to do.

The chief causes of trouble, according to the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, are: First, land which is flat or which slopes toward the cellar wall. Second, absence of eave troughs and down spouts to carry off rain water; failure to repair defective gutters and spouts; failure to keep them cleared of leaves and other trash. The betraying symptoms of gutter and down spout troubles are surface depressions near the cellar wall, muddy pools, mud-spattered walls, and water-soaked ground in contact with the cellar wall. Third, ground water close to or higher than the cellar bottom. If water stands in the cellar or the bottom is constantly moist, the rooms above are almost sure to be cold and damp.

In dog day weather, sweating or condensation of atmospheric moisture on the walls, floor and other cold surfaces within the cellar sometimes gives trouble. Dense masses of vines, shrubbery and trees near the house are other causes of cellar dampness.

The first step is to locate the cause of trouble and see what can be done about it. Are gutters and down spouts in good repair and does the ground slope sharply to shed water away from the cellar wall? If the slope of the ground on which the house stands is wrong, it should be regraded. Ground water is more of a problem and usually calls for a 4-inch tile drain along the outside bottom of the cellar wall. To avoid such expense, a simple hydraulic or electric drainer or pump is frequently installed in a low corner of the cellar.

Making old cellars water-tight and damp-proof is usually more difficult than in new construction. If it is desired to damp-proof or shed water down the back of a wall, outside work is more effective than inside work, but it necessitates excavating a work trench about 2 feet wide. Expense or the presence of trees and shrubbery may make it advisable to excavate outside the cellar wall. In such instances a drain may be laid along the inside bottom of the foundation but this is generally less effective than an exterior drain. The drain, whether inside or outside, must be extended down hill to a suitable outlet.

Damp-proofing, the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering explains, is sometimes done with a thick coat of hot coal-tar pitch or asphalt, mopped directly on the walls or on a water-proofing fabric applies as a membrane to the walls. Work of this kind should be done by experienced workmen. Farmers or others who attempt it should first obtain explicit directions from the manufacturer who supplies the materials and should then experiment in a small way before beginning the real waterproofing or damp-proofing job.

Plaster coats of Portland cement mortar have been much used to waterproof and damp-proof cellars, and have been reasonably satisfactory when applied by skilled plasterers working in practically continuous operation. In this way joints in the plastering are eliminated.

For those of my listeners who are planning new houses, the real solution of cellar problems is like the advice to choose one's parents wisely. Have it built right to begin with. That is, the cellar is in the hands of the architect and builder. Even before they enter the picture, however, the choice of your house location may influence the dryness of the cellar. The Bureau of Agricultural Engineering recommends a moderately elevated site having open, porous soil, and good, deep, natural drainage.

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